

break your oath, I will slay you by the foulest death that may be.⁵¹

From the day when Eichard thus swooped down upon the parliamentary heretics, to the day when his pride and power and the right line of Plantagenet passed away with the passing century, no important change took place in the position of the Lollards. Although occasional arrests were made, and although in some centres of population, like Leicester, secrecy was prudent, and perhaps necessary, persecution was not consistently applied. The Poor Priests patrolled those districts where their protectors were strong, almost as safely as the friars themselves. This state of things was in no way the result of any favour shown to heresy by Eichard. The Church could not have wished for a more orthodox King. When the University bade fair to defy the authority of the Bishops, he had reduced the schoolmen to obedience by the royal authority. He had passed an ordinance against the Poor Priests which the Commons had insisted on repealing. He had again and again issued special mandates bidding his officers arrest Lollards who escaped or defied the Bishop's Summoners.² He had issued general orders for the seizure of Wycliffe's works, and lastly, he had come back across St. George's Channel in order to crush at Westminster the heretics' parliamentary designs. Round the magnificent tomb which he himself adorned in memory of his dead wife, and against the day of his own death, runs an inscription which the visitor to Westminster Abbey can still read. It contains the proud boast that * He overthrew the heretics and laid their friends low.¹³

It was not any liberality in the King that made Eichard's reign a time to which later Lollards looked back with regret. Persecution had been partial and irregular for other reasons ; because public opinion both in the country and in the House of Commons had been against interference, because powerful men had befriended the heretics on their estates and in

¹ John de Trokelowe (B. S.), 174-83; Froiss., iv. cap. lxxxiv.; Wals., ii. 216-7; *Fasc. Z.*, 360-9; Stubbs, ii. 494, note 2; *Post Mortem Inquisitiones Calendar*, iii. 259-60, and Wals., ii. 159 for John Montagu. ² *Rot. Claus.* and *Rot. Pat. MSS.*, passim.

•* Stanley's *Westminster Abbey*, ed. 2, 148-9.